

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

----- 038660

O R 251021Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2790

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 0933

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS ET US

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE AYALEW MANDEFRO

REFS: (A) STATE 17883; (B) ADDIS 829; (C) USDAO 17/1415ZJAN75

(D) ADDIS 911 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY. IN JANUARY 24 CONVERSATION WITH MOD, LATTER TOLD POL COUNSELOR THAT HE HAD AND WOULD CONTINUE TO DO EVERYTHING IN HIS POWER TO PUT AN END TO INCREASING PRESS HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE US. HE DESCRIBED THE FORMIDABLE OBSTACLES WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE OVERCOME IN CURRENT CIRUMSTANCES. HE SAID THAT THERE WAS DEEPENING AND WIDESPREAD SUSPICION WITHIN THE EPMG AND THE "DIRG" OF US INTENTIONS TOWARDS ETHIOPIA'S CURRENT GOVERNMENT; THAT MANY BELIEVED THE US TO BE ACTIVELY WORKING AGAINST ETHIOPIA'S NATIONAL UNITY; THAT THE CHARGE'S FAILURE THUS FAR TO CALL ON CHAIRMAN TEFERI BANTI ENHANCED THESE FEELINGS AND SUSPICIONS; AND THAT AS A CONSEQUENCE IT WAS IMPERATIVE FOR FONMIN KIFLE WODAJO TO BE RECEIVED SOONEST BY THE SECRETARY FOR A FULL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. WITH RESPECT TO THE POSSIBILITY OF DIPLOMATIC TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS IN ETHIOPIA, THE MINISTER PROMISED TO DO WHAT HE COULD SO AS TO HAVE AN EVENTUAL ORDER SO COUCHED AS TO ACCOMMODATE OPERATIONAL TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. AT SUGGESTION MOFA'S AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR, POL COUNSELOR CALLED ON MOD AYALEW MANDEFRO (WITH WHOM HE HAS PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP DATING FROM MINISTER'S PREVIOUS INCARNATION

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AS ETHIOPIA'S AMBASSADOR TO SOMALIA) JANUARY 24 TO DISCUSS

INSECURITY OF AMERICANS IN ETHIOPIA AND REPORTS REACHING EMBASSY OF POSSIBILITY IMMINENT LIMITATION DIPLOMATIC TRAVEL TO 40-KILOMETER RADIUS FROM ADDIS ABABA. CONVERSATION, WHICH SCHEDULED LAST APPROXIMATELY 20 MINUTES, STRETCHED TO 75 AS AYALEW SEIZED OPPORTUNITY SPEAK HIS MIND ON CURRENT STATE ETHIOPIAN-AMERICAN BILATERAL RELATIONS. SALIENT POINTS WHICH EMERGED DURING CONVERSATION FOLLOW:

A) POL COUNSELOR OPENED WITH EXPOSITION WHICH CLOSELY PARALLELED CONTENTS PARAS 1 AND 2 REF A. POL COUNSELOR NOTED THAT ALTHOUGH THERE WAS CLEARLY NO ONE-TO-ONE CORRELATION BETWEEN INCREASING DIRECT AND INDIRECT PRESS ATTACKS ON US AND RISING FEELING OF INSECURITY WITHIN AMERICAN COMMUNITY, WE HAD NOTED SIGNIFICANT RISE OF LATE IN PETTY CRIME VICTIMIZING AMERICANS AND IN STREET VITUPERATION DIRECTED AT THEM. AS RESULT, SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS HAD ALREADY EXPRESSED THEIR SENSE OF INSECURITY TO EMBASSY, AND IT SEEMED MEANINGFUL THAT VOLUNTEERS IN QUESTION PRIMARILY RESIDENT IN LARGER CENTERS (DESSIE, JIMMA, ETC.), WHEREAS THOSE IN SMALL VILLAGES WHERE MEDIA HAVE LESS IMPACT CONTINUED FEEL WANTED AND SECURE. POL COUNSELOR PUT IT AS HIS OPINION THAT THERE WERE THOSE IN ETHIOPIAN MEDIA STRUCTURE WHO HAD ADOPTED DEVICE USING US AS WHIPPING BOY TO ILLUSTRATE ETHIOPIA'S REVOLUTIONARY NEW DIRECTIONS. POL COUNSELOR FELT THAT THIS PARTICULAR TECHNIQUE EMINENTLY DISPENSABLE AND THAT IDEA WHICH SOME MAY HARBOR THAT CASTIGATING US COSTS NOTHING IS ERRONEOUS. PROGRAMS WERE CARRIED OUT BY PEOPLE AND COULD ONLY BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED IF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THEM BECAME OBJECTS OF ABUSE. MOD RESPONDED WITH EXPRESSION OF UNDERSTANDING OUR CONCERN. HE SAID THAT, WITH LIKE-MINDED FRIENDS, HE HAD BEEN ASSERTING HIMSELF AGAINST THE SORT OF THING POL COUNSELOR HAD BEEN DESCRIBING. HE WOULD, OF COURSE, CONTINUE. EMBASSY MUST UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, THAT PROBLEM PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH IN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES. PRESS AND MEDIA NOT ONLY BLUNDERING WITH REGARD TO US BUT CREATING OTHER DIFFICULTIES, AND IT HAD ALREADY BEEN DECIDED CHANGE PERSONNEL IN CHARGE OF MEDIA FOR THAT REASON. STILL, THIS IS NOT A SIMPLE THING TO DO. THERE ARE ELEMENTS WHO ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING TO STRAIN OR BREAK ETHIOPIA'S TIES WITH THE US, INCLUDING SOME WORKING FOR A COMPLETE REALIGNMENT OF ETHIOPIA'S FOREIGN POLICY. ONE OF THE FOCAL POINTS OF THEIR ACTIVITY IS THE MEDIA. THEY EXIST INSIDE  
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THE "DIRG" AS WELL AS OUTSIDE. HE (AYALEW) WAS WORKING WITH OTHERS TO HOLD THE LINE WITH THE "DIRG" AND WITHIN THE EPMG ON THE PROPOSITION THAT ETHIOPIA'S BEST INTERESTS WERE SERVED BY CONTINUING THE FRIENDLY RELATIONS WHICH HAD EXISTED WITH THE US. HE WAS SAYING TO HIS INTERLOCUTORS THAT IN HIS VIEW THE US ALSO WISHED IN THE SERVICE OF ITS REGIONAL INTERESTS, AND PARTICULARLY ITS MIDDLE EAST INTERESTS, TO CONTINUE TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA. HOWEVER, MOD CONTINUED, THERE

WAS NO GAINSAIDING THE SPREADING DEEPENING OF SUSPICION WITHIN THE EPMG AND THE "DIRG" REGARDING US INTENTIONS TOWARDS ETHIOPIA'S CURRENT ADMINISTRATION. "WHY ARE YOU TAKING NO INITIATIVE TO APPROACH THE "DIRG?" WHY HAS THE CHARGE NOT CALLED ON CHAIRMAN TEFERI BANTI?" POL COUNSELOR RESPONDED THAT WE HAD LET IT BE KNOWN THAT ANY TIME THE "DIRG" WISHED TO ENTER INTO DIRECT CONTACT WITH ANY MEMBER OF THE EMBASSY, WE WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO DISCUSS ANYTHING THEY MIGHT WISH TO RAISE. REGARDING THE CHARGE'S CALL ON CHAIRMAN TEFERI BANTI, WE WERE MINDFUL OF THE CONVERSATION WHICH FONMIN KIFLE WODAJO IS TO HAVE WITH THE SECRETARY. MOREOVER, WE HAD BEEN TOLD (CF ADDIS 0068) TO EXPECT THE CHARGE TO BE CALLED IN TO MEET WITH THE CHAIRMAN, ALTHOUGH THIS HAD NOT OCCURRED. MOD SAID THAT IT HAD NOT OCCURRED BECAUSE ELEMENTARY COURTESY AS WELL AS NATIONAL PRIDE DICTATED THAT THE INITIATIVE FOR SUCH A CALL SHOULD LIE WITH THE HEAD OF MISSION. HE (AYALEW) DID NOT KNOW THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY OUR FAILURE TO DATE TO TAKE THIS STEP, BUT HE HAD NO DOUBT WHATSOEVER THAT DAMAGE HAD BEEN CAUSED.

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ACTION SS-25

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O R 251021Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2791

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B) MOD AYALEW SAID THAT, INEVITABLY, MUCH OF THE FEAR AND SUSPICION WITHIN THE "DIRG" AND THE EPMG REGARDING US INTENTIONS ATTACHED TO THE GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT MAJOR PREOCCUPATION WITH ERITREA. THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO APPEAR TO BELIEVE THAT THE US IS ACTIVELY WORKING TO DESTROY ETHIOPIA'S NATIONAL UNITY AND, SPECIFICALLY, TO DETACH ERITREA FROM THE BODY OF ETHIOPIA. POL COUNSELOR SAID THAT THE EMBASSY WAS AWARE OF AND DISTURBED BY THESE STORIES, WHICH ELEMENTS HOSTILE TO THE

CONTINUED GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES APPEAR TO BE USING TO THEIR OWN PURPOSE. IN THE CURRENT CLIMATE OF TRANSITION AND UNCERTAINTY, POL COUNSELOR FOUND IT USEFUL IN CONTACTS WITH CONCERNED ETHIOPIANS TO URGE THAT THEY CONSIDER THE RECORD OF PROGRAMS AND ASSISTANCE BEING CARRIED FORWARD BY THE US IN ETHIOPIA. THE EMPHASIS, HESUGGESTED, SHOULD BE ON WHAT IS BEING DONE RATHER THAN ON SPECULATION. EVERYTHIN THAT IS BEING DONE IN ECONOMIC AID, IN DROUGHT RELIEF, IN EDUCATION, IN MILITARY ASSISTANCE, REFLECTS THE TRUTH, WHICH IS THAT THE US WISHES TO BE THE FRIEND OF ETHIOPIA NOW AS BEFORE AND THAT IT HOPES THAT ETHIOPIANS, INCLUDING ERITREANS, WILL FIND AN ACCOMMODATION THAT WILL PERMIT THEM TO LIVE CONSTRUCTIVELY TOGETHER. AYALEW NODDED AND SAID THAT THIS WAS ALSO HIS OWN VIEW OF THE REALITY. UNFORTUNATELY, CURRENT DIFFICULTIES MADE IT EASY FOR SUSPICIOUS OR ILL-MINDED PEOPLE TO PROJECT THEIR FEARS ON TO OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. THESE WERE SOME OF THE REASONS WHY IT WAS IMPERATIVE, THE MINISTER SAID, FOR KIFLE WODAJO TO BE RECEIVED PROMPTLY FOR A FULL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BY SECRETARY KISSINGER.

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2. POL COUNSELOR THEN RAISED SECOND SUBJECT, THE POSSIBILITY OF CONSTRAINT ON DIPLOMATIC TRAVEL IN ETHIOPIA.

A) HE SAID THAT EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED REPORTS FROM VARIOUS RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS WITHIN THE EPMG (E.G. REF C) THAT THE DECISION HAD BEEN MADE TO RESTRICT DIPLOMATIC TRAVEL IN ETHIOPIA TO A RADIUS OF SOME 40 KILOMETERS FROM ADDIS ABABA AND THAT AN ORDER TO THIS EFFECT MIGHT BE ISSUED AT ANY TIME. THE EMBASSY DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THESE REPORTS WERE ACCURATE BUT HAD TAKEN ACCOUNT OF THE FACT THAT THEY CAME FROM WELL-PLACED, RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS, IF THEY WERE ACCURATE, OUR PRELIMINARY REACTION WAS THAT THEY MIGHT SERIOUSLY INHIBIT OUR ABILITY TO CARRY FORWARD CURRENT US PROGRAMS OF MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA. VIRTUALLY ALL OF THESE PROGRAMS WERE BASED ON STATUTES CONTAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MONITORING OF THEIR IMPLEMENTATION. WHERE THESE REQUIREMENTS WERE LESS STRINGENT, VIZ., IN THE PEACE CORPS PROGRAM, THE NATURE OF THE PROGRA ITSELF DEMANDED THAT CONTACT BETWEEN THE DIRECTING STAFF AND THE VOLUNTEERS BE FREELY AVAILABLE AS CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT REQUIRE.

B) AYALEW REPLIED THAT HE WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH THESE REPORTS. HOWEVER, HE, PERSONALLY, FAVORED SOME CONSTRAINT ON DIPLOMATIC TRAVEL. "THIS IS NO TIME FOR JUNKETS." TO BE SURE, IF SUCH AN ORDER IS IN THE WORKS IT SHOULD BE COUCHED SO AS TO ACCOMMODATE THE OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF ON-GOING PROGRAMS. HE WOULD DO HIS BEST TO THIS END. (COMMENT: MOFA MINSTATE ARAYA TOLD CHARGE MORNING JANUARY 25 THAT REGULATIONS ON MOVEMENT UNDER CONSIDERATION WOULD DEFINITELY NOT HINDER AID PROGRAM TRAVEL OR WEEKEND VACATION TRIPS FOR DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL. END COMMENT.)

3. AS POL COUNSELOR TOOK HIS LEAVE, AYALEW SUDDENLY ASKED FOR FORMER'S "PERSONAL ASSESSMENT" OF CASE OF "ARRESTED TOURISTS UP IN ASMARA." IN EXCHANGE WHICH FOLLOWED IT BECAME CLEAR THAT MINISTER HAD REFERENCE TO CASE OF ARRESTED AMCIT RICHARD HANNA. POL COUNSELOR POINTED OUT THAT HANNA HAD BEEN RESIDENT IN ETHIOPIA FOR OVER A DECADE. HE WAS NO TOURIST. HE HAD BEEN A SCHOOL TEACHER AT KAGNEW STATION. AYALEW SAID "HE HAD A TRANSMITTER UP IN HIS APARTMENT." POL COUNSELOR SAID THAT INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO HIM WAS ONLY THAT HE HAD HAD A TRANSOCEANIC RADIO RECEIVER WITH AN OUTDOOR ROOF ANTENNA. COMMENT: AYALEW CLEARLY DID NOT BELIEVE THIS. END COMMENT.

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## Message Attributes

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